

The Women from Number 17

An interpretation of the lives of 3 women living at Number 17 Princess Drive, Borrowwash during the last century.

Following the success of her 2015 Community Christmas play 'Number 17 - 100 year history of a Borrowwash house' Chrissie Hall, working with 'WashArts', was commissioned to write three dramatic monologues for 'Unexamined Lives' a groundbreaking Heritage Lottery funded project.

The brief:

To research, write, cast and direct monologues about each of three women known to have lived in Number 17 during different periods of 'herstory'. The monologues to be performed for guests and VIPs at the Gala Celebration Evening marking the culmination of 'Unexamined Lives' and the successful concluding exhibition at the award winning Erewash Museum.



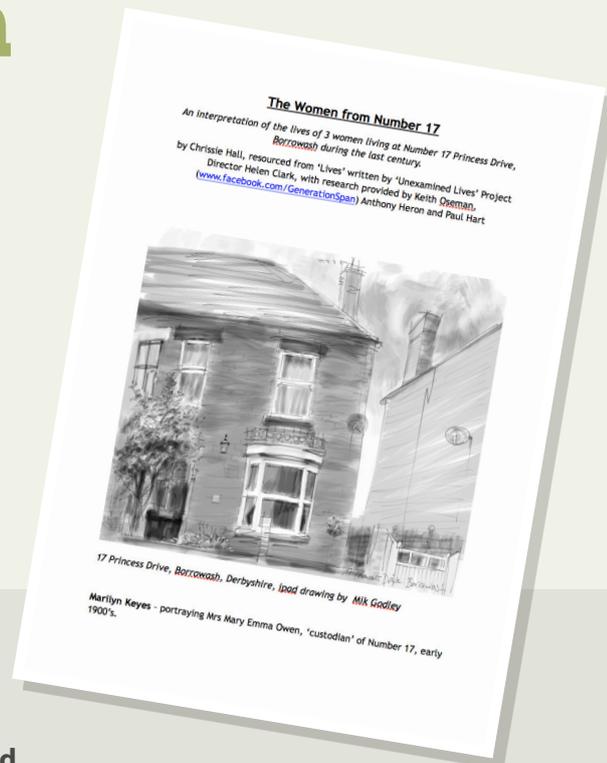
1. Mrs. Mary Emma Owen, - Edwardian lady, early 1900's, exploring housework; 1st World War son and husband both recruited; social cohesion, 'Borrowwash boys' lost in battle; role of religion; conscientious objectors; local Suffragette movement (Alice Wheeldon); changing role of women.

2. Mrs. Sarah Ann Webster – mid 20th Century, exploring housework; attitudes to 2nd World War, role of religion, loss of son killed in action, health, education, divorce, family loyalties and social cohesion.

3. Mrs. Christine Hall (Writer/Director) – 'Swingin' 60s' era exploring popular culture and music; mini-skirts and fashion; the pill; promiscuity and marriage; women at work; maternity leave; Do-it-Yourself (DIY); home furnishing; social mobility; cars and consumerism.

Challenges:-

- To audition and select three local actors able to meet the challenge of a monologue performance in an intimate non-arts venue
- Secure local accessible rehearsal space and negotiate time schedules with busy actors
- Direct the pieces according to the original artistic intention, whilst working collaboratively with actors
- Source props, costumes and create a soundscape within time and budget constraints
- Arrange a dress and tech. rehearsal in Erewash Museum
- Accommodate a large audience in a small space



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Solutions

Social media 'call outs' brought in a dozen local actors expressing an interest in auditioning. Difficult choices were made - the perfect trio were cast.

The Community Room at Ilkeston Fire Station made an excellent audition/rehearsal space. Occasional earsplittingly loud fire alerts brought rehearsals to a halt until the fire engines had deployed. Fleeting glimpses of fit firemen were an added bonus!



Nottingham Community Wardrobe provided expert advice and authentic Edwardian, and mid 20th century costumes. The 'Swingin' 60s' costume was sourced online. Soundscape was expertly created by Martin Hall.



Outcomes

- An exciting and fulfilling professional development experience for Writer/Director Chrissie Hall. The actors found portraying 'real' women a new, exciting and slightly scary challenge - but did it brilliantly.
- Audience reaction during and after the performances, and many complimentary after-show responses.
- A fitting tribute to all the 'Lives' of Borrowash.
- Three successful scripts; three actors who excelled; an audience with a unique insight into three 20th Century 'herstories' and an appreciation of Number 17, the house all three women called home.



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